UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/825/Part III/9
21 July 1994

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART III. EUROPE

Section 9 - Greece

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-02796

III.9 GREECE

Country Overview

Characteristics of the Refugee Population

1. At 31 December 1993, Greece hosted 7,300 refugees and asylum-seekers, 3,600 being Convention refugees and 3,700 having been recognized under the UNHCR Mandate prior to 1993. About 35 per cent of these came from Iraq, 20 per cent from the Islamic Republic of Iran and the remainder from neighbouring Eastern European countries, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

2. The vast majority of the refugees and asylum-seekers are of urban background and reside in Athens. Approximately 30 per cent of the refugee population is female.

3. The Greek Government continued to accommodate about 300 asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries, mostly ethnic Kurds from Turkey and Iraq, in its reception centre at Laviron. In addition, government assistance was provided to a small number of ethnic Greeks from Albania and to an increasing number of ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union who were accepted for resettlement in Greece. Some 9,300 have so far been registered.

4. In the first four months of 1994, 219 newly arrived asylum-seekers approached the legal counselling services of the Greek Refugee Council. Of these, 36 were considered to have credible claims and were advised to apply to the authorities for refugee status. During the same period, the Ministry of Public Order granted refugee status to 27 persons (17 Turks, three Iraqis, four Iranians, two Haitians and one Zairian). A total of 71 were resettled from Greece.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter of 1994)

5. Refugee policy in Greece continued to develop further towards establishing a national legal refugee framework which encompasses essential aspects of the legal, social and economic rights of refugees, in line with other States of the European Union.

6. In March 1993, following the new Alien's Law 1978/1991, a presidential decree on the implementation of the procedure for determination of refugee status was issued. As a result, the exercise undertaken by UNHCR in previous years, to determine eligibility under its mandate, was abolished.

7. An inter-ministerial decree regarding the social rights of refugees, in particular their right to employment and the introduction of measures to facilitate their integration into the labour market, is under preparation and is expected to be promulgated in 1994.

Programme objectives and priorities

8. Following the transfer of individual casework to the Greek Refugee Council, the Branch Office in Athens will continue to carry out its function of monitoring legal protection and representation for asylum-seekers, as well as to ensure that national asylum policy, legislation and practice is in accordance with international refugee law. In this regard, the Branch Office will endeavour to promote an early adoption of pending refugee legislation with a view to improving the socio-economic condition of refugees in Greece.

9. In exercising its advisory and advocacy role in 1994 and 1995, UNHCR will also endeavour to promote local integration and income-generating activities, given that most refugees are unable to obtain work permits due to the partial reservation maintained by Greece to Article 17 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In this connection, UNHCR will try to regularize the status of Mandate refugees, whose presence on Greek territory is tolerated by the Government rather than protected by legal provisions.

10. In the course of 1994, the involvement of the Office in resettlement to third countries will be phased out, whereas conditions for local settlement and integration of refugees in Greece will be further promoted.

11. In line with UNHCR's regional objectives in Europe, the Branch Office will further strengthen its activities in the areas of public information and refugee law training. The celebration of a National Refugee Day (4 April) has become a regular feature. Other events, such as a national drawing contests for school children on refugee themes, have also helped to increase media coverage of UNHCR activities, increasing in turn the demand for distribution of Public Information material to target audiences. A number of refugee law training courses have already been organized in Athens and other regions, with courses to be offered to government officials, border and immigration officers in various parts of Greece, with a view to enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the applicable legal framework.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

12. The Greek Refugee Council and the Social Work Foundation (SWF) continue to be UNHCR's major operational partners for urban refugees, with the International Social Service (ISS) providing counselling services with partial UNHCR support for refugees at the Lavrion reception centre. In addition, the Branch Office maintains regular contact with the Government and a number of refugee support groups such as the Greek Refugee Council, Caritas and the World Council of Churches in order to coordinate strategies and streamline actions.

General Programmes

Variations in planned activities in 1993

13. Overall, large numbers of mostly economically motivated irregular migrants from neighbouring countries, such as the Middle East and Asia, arrived in Greece. However, the total refugee population in Greece decreased in 1993. This was in part because there were more departures (some 1,050) than arrivals with valid

claims to refugee status (134). Registered departures were mainly for resettlement purposes.

14. During 1993, 1,155 refugees received modest monthly allowances for basic needs. Some 2,290 benefited from counselling services for housing, health, education and self-employment.

1994 planned implementation

15. Pending the opening of new government facilities for refugees, the care and maintenance programme will continue in 1994 with essentially the same assistance features and implementation arrangements as in 1993. However, greater emphasis will be placed on promoting international refugee law and advocacy.

16. While resettlement solutions are expected to be available only in very exceptional cases, certain groups will be counselled to repatriate subject to certain changes having taken place in respective countries of origin and also in view of the lack of prospects for permanent settlement in Greece.

17. UNHCR will intensify its search for additional community and private sector support for refugee needs in Greece.

1995 programme proposals

Care and Maintenance

3.9.18 In 1995, UNHCR will continue to provide legal assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Greece, as well as material assistance to destitute refugees to cover their basic needs. Counselling will be offered to recognized refugees residing in Greece, primarily in areas of employment, health and education. Advice services will also be provided to asylum-seekers and refugees residing at Lavrion Refugee Centre.

3.9.19 With major changes announced in government refugee policy and practice, which are likely to become effective in the course of 1994, UNHCR will reorientate its activities. UNHCR is closely involved with the relevant government departments in order to enhance local settlement solutions, to which UNHCR will give priority.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

Variations in planned activities in 1993

20. Expenditure was higher than expected as a result of a 27 per cent salary increase for local staff. This increase was offset mainly by savings resulting from the fact that the post of Public Information Officer, which was created in mid-1993, was not filled until early 1994. Expenditure for extra-regional travel, communications and non-expendable property were therefore also lower than expected.

1994 planned implementation

21. The revised 1994 estimate is slightly higher than the initial estimate. Amounts have been budgeted to replace outdated office computer equipment and expected costs related to the move to new premises.

1995 programme proposals

22. Initial estimates are lower as it is anticipated that the office move will have taken place during 1994 and that no new equipment will be required.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN GREECE

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES				
1,450.6	1,518.1	1,196.7	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	1,245.4
3.7 a/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
1.4 a/	–	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	–
25.3 a/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
–	–	520.0	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	487.9
1,481.0	1,518.1	1,716.7	SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	1,733.3
210.9	220.6	113.0	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	87.9
1,691.9	1,738.7	1,829.7	GRAND TOTAL	1,821.2

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation